

Local Enterprise Partnership

09 September 2021

Mayor's Update

Purpose of Report

To provide LEP Board Members with an update on key Mayoral activity relating to the economic agenda.

1. The Comprehensive Spending Review, Integrated Rail Plan and Levelling Up

Three long awaited, and interlinked key Government documents are due to be published this Autumn. Expectations are rightly extremely high for the long-awaited Levelling Up White Paper, the Comprehensive Spending Review and the Integrated Rail Plan.

Whilst I welcome the Government's commitment to levelling up, I remain deeply concerned that so far, it's more slogan than substance, without even a definition of what they are trying to achieve. With the pandemic having shone such a spotlight on the starkness and scale of inequalities in our country there is a need for a clear, tangible plan, backed by substantive investment, to begin to tackle this systemic issue.

Given the promises and commitments that have been made, I'll be judging government by their deeds rather than just their words, to level up South Yorkshire. The continued and unacceptable delay to the publication of the Integrated Rail Plan, which we've been waiting nine months for, further fuels the suspicion that what is being planned falls far short of the promises that were made. In the absence of this document, I struggle to see how this government can claim to be serious about 'levelling up' the North when there are so many question marks about something as basic as improving rail connections between our towns and cities.

Colleagues on the MCA, LEP and I are not simply sat waiting for Government. We're focused on doing everything we can to deliver the ambitious and transformative vision in our Strategic Economic Plan and to create a stronger, greener, and fairer region in our renewal from the pandemic. Some highlights of this recent activity are summarised below.

2. City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement Bid

Partners across the region have been working together over the summer to produce our bid for a City Region Transport Settlement (CRSTS). South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA) is one of eight Combined Authorities eligible for this £4.2bn fund and is required to submit its draft bid to Government by the w/c 6th September and its final proposal by the 15th.

The development of South Yorkshire's submission to what is an extremely significant funding opportunity has represented a herculean effort. In preparing our submission my overriding concern has been to preserve the integrity of the bid to ensure that we meet the criteria laid down by government as well as both local needs and South Yorkshire's strategic challenges. It has been a balancing act!

Our proposed programme will improve transport in South Yorkshire's, with a particular focus on transforming public transport and active travel, connecting our people and communities to opportunity, enabling them to make sustainable choices.

Whilst the submission of our bid is an important milestone, it is only the beginning of a much bigger process to secure the investment so urgently needed and then to deliver it. I'll be fighting to secure every penny needed to realise our ambitions and I'm confident the strength of our bid means we are well placed to succeed.

3. Local skills support for South Yorkshire's Learners

At the beginning of August our Mayoral Combined Authority took a significant step forward in its devolution journey by assuming responsibility for £42m of skills funding for those aged 19 and over, known as the Adult Education Budget (AEB). Skills and adult education are critical to building a bigger and better economy for our region – giving people the opportunity they need to prosper and helping businesses grow.

Local control over the AEB will help people improve their skills to progress in work, stay in work or get back to work. It will also mean that the local skills system can be transformed to focus on the needs of South Yorkshire's local businesses and the industries that are predicted to grow in the coming years.

Local control of the AEB has also meant that South Yorkshire based providers now comprise 46% of all providers, up from 8% previously, following a robust procurement exercise which has been ongoing since December 2020.

We will continue to work with training providers to shape South Yorkshire's skills agenda to meet our region's unique needs. Together we will support our residents to get good jobs and progress their careers in South Yorkshire's key sectors and make learning more inclusive.

4. South Yorkshire Health and Wellbeing Mayoral Community Fund

The past 18 months have been extremely tough for so many, and our community groups have done tremendous work throughout the pandemic. If Covid has shown us anything at all, it's how precious health and wellbeing is.

For these reasons I'm really pleased to have invested £200,000 to launch the new South Yorkshire Health and Wellbeing Mayoral Community Fund. Providing grants for community groups of up to £10,000 it will seek to address key issues such as:

- Mental health in disproportionately affected communities across South Yorkshire;
- Funding community organisations supporting social and green prescribing;
- Physical well-being and mental health; and
- Engaging young people in activities addressing health and well-being.

The fund will be administered by the South Yorkshire's Community Foundation and more details on how to apply are available [here](#). We are continuing to monitor applications and demand for the fund and are exploring potential mechanisms to extend with additional investment, including from the private sector.